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The Right Reverend
The Bishop of Norwich ^{2.}

CHARGE

INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED

TO THE

CLERGY

OF

NORWICH,

AT THE PRIMARY VISITATION

OF

GEORGE,

LORD BISHOP OF THAT DIOCESE.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE infirmity, under which I have laboured for some time past, having rendered it impossible for me to meet my Clergy at the customary season, and the great uncertainty when I may be able to recover sufficient strength for that purpose, have induced me to transmit a few lines to them from the press; that so, whenever I am called hence, I may leave some testimony of my regard for them, and attention to their concerns.

They have my thanks for the many instances of their kindness, and whether living or dying, I pray God to bless them in every good word and work.

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REVEREND BRETHREN,

WHEN God surveyed the world which he had made, he saw that every thing was good and perfect in its kind: and such as he made it, such it continues to this day, under a law which shall never be broken. But when we turn our eyes toward the moral world, we find it unsettled and variable. It receives a law which it doth not preserve, but becomes weary of truth, and studious of novelty. The body is continually changing the fashion of its garments, but such fashions may pass and repass with little offence: new opinions, which are the fashions of the mind, are of dangerous influence, especially in religion, where they are most apt to intrude.

We, therefore, my brethren, whose office it is to

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watch for the souls of men, should carefully observe, what changes are taking place in our own age and country ; what good doctrines are decaying, what evil opinions are rising up and spreading ; tracing them, so far as we are able, to the causes and sources from whence they have proceeded. Such an enquiry as this being altogether of a spiritual intention, and for the conduct of which we must one day give a strict account to Almighty God, no secular fears, no partial attachments should interfere to render it ineffectual.

The great doctrines essential to christianity, and without which it cannot be considered as a Religion true in itself, or beneficial to us, are those concerning the nature of God ; the nature of man ; the saving principle of faith ; the importance and use of the church ; the obedience due to civil government ; the necessity of a pure life, and holy conversation.

The learned and inquisitive, who see what is passing in the world, need not be informed, that, in this age, and this country, there are many dangerous corruptions, many errors propagated in respect to all the doctrines above mentioned.

mentioned. Occasional books and pamphlets, with periodical publications of various descriptions, betray lamentable mistakes in some, and very unwarrantable bitterness in others, against the distinguishing articles of the christian faith. I do not mean, therefore, to inform my learned brethren of that which they know already ; but still it is my duty to remind them, and stir up their attention, that they may unite with me, as I assure myself they will be ready to do, in every good measure, which prudence and piety shall suggest, for the preservation of our common faith.

I. That God in his nature is *one Jehovah*, and in persons, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, is the doctrine into which we are baptized : it meets us every where in the Scriptures, and is therefore very properly interwoven with all the forms and services of our Liturgy.

The Trinity of the New Testament is undoubtedly the same Jehovah, with his Word and Spirit, in the Old ; and Arianism seems to have arisen among those Christians, who took up from the Jews, in their state of apostasy, the false ideas they had formed of the God revealed
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to them by Moses and the prophets.* They, who do not agree with us in our belief, appeal to the Scripture *against us*, but do not appear to depend upon it *for themselves*; because they apply so frequently to other topics, as better suiting their purpose, and more accommodated to the feelings of the vain and inexperienced. How often hath it been urged, that we ought not to receive the faith which the first fathers of the church, and the succeeding fathers of the Reformation, have delivered to us, because we are of late years so far advanced above them in knowledge? But I have never seen the connexion pointed out between any modern improvements in science, and the new doctrines of reformers in theology. We are certainly much improved, for instance, in the art of making time-keepers, above those who lived an hundred years ago; but no man will say, that we thence derive any advantage for numbering our days more wisely; or that we have any clearer ideas of eternity, than we had before. An eminent artist in this way may doubt of the Apostles Creed; but then there is no visible

* Mr. Whitaker, in his *Origin of Arianism disclosed*, seems to have gone upon the right ground; and his work merits consideration.

visible relation between his art and his unbelief. The conceit of superior learning has always had an ill effect upon christianity; and is frequently found in those who have no great matters to value themselves upon. We may be as learned as we can make ourselves, and yet continue good christians; because true learning and true religion were never yet at variance; but the moment we are vain of our learning, we begin to be in danger, and some folly or other is not far off. The Greeks were unfit to receive the Gospel, because they boasted of a sort of wisdom, between which and the wisdom of the Gospel there was no affinity. They delighted to speak of little things in great words; while they who first published the christian faith propounded to the world the highest objects in the plainest language. Hence it hath been observed, that persons in the same state of life with the Apostles of Jesus Christ, have attained to a great understanding of sacred things; while some scholars of high pretensions have betrayed great dulness and misconception in respect to the same: for our religion ever had, and ever will have, some things, which are hidden from those who are wise and prudent in their own estimation, and are revealed to persons of teachable, child-like dispositions.

tions. The natural and adequate effect of all knowledge, when rightly used, is to make men wiser; but the affectation and abuse of learning have a contrary effect.

Many appear to have been drawn away from the Trinity of Revelation by an abuse of abstract reasoning: that is, by presuming upon an analogy, which does not exist, between mathematical truth, and all other truth. We have seen it argued, seriously in appearance, that three cannot be one in divinity, because it is not so in arithmetic. But we are here to distinguish: the mathematical sciences give us rules by which all *quantities* are to be measured; but when those rules are applied by analogy to the *qualities* of things, they must fail us, and the experiment is always hazardous. The specific difference between gold and lead, with the respective value of each, is an object of mathematical consideration; but the difference between good and evil is not; for these latter are to be compared and estimated as qualities. God in his nature and his perfections can never be considered under any idea we have of quantity. We know him and describe him by his attributes; all of which are qualities; original in Him, and infinite in themselves.

selves. It must therefore be extremely dangerous to speak of God, and borrow our ideas from terms applied to quantity of any kind.

It may be hazardous to assign the causes of error upon speculation; but facts will speak for themselves. It is well known that most of our enlightened reasoners, who take the highest liberties with the Faith of a Trinity in Unity, have been bred in those schools where the sciences which are conversant about quantities claim a superior, if not an exclusive excellence. In their place they are excellent, and give absolute certainty; but in religion, being out of their place, they must of course turn into vain deceit. Let us therefore most humbly wish it to be well considered by those whom it may concern, that mathematicians, merely as such, have in religion no pre-eminence above other men; that mathematical analogies are not transferable to morality, theology, politics; nor to any science which is conversant solely with the qualities of things.

Another prevailing source of error in divinity, is the human philosophy of deism; which the deists them-
 selves

selves very improperly term the *Religion of Nature*. A popular divine, of great talents and reputation (Dr. S. Clarke), unhappily conceded to the deists, that an *Unity of Person* in God is the *first principle of Natural Religion*: since which time a nearer relation than was formerly known hath been growing up between doubting christians and professed infidels. The attempt seems preposterous, that the wisdom of nature, be it what it may, should dictate to Christianity, which was sent from heaven to dictate to *that*, and is attended with the divine grace necessary to render it receptive of those principles and doctrines which are superior to its own, and must be conclusive against them.—I forbear to insist farther upon this, because Natural Religion will meet us again, as we proceed, and must be considered more fully in another place.

II. Mistakes about *the nature of man* are almost as dangerous as about the nature of God: and the nature of man can be known only from the history of man; of which the heathens preserved a tradition, but the original is in the bible. There is a species of moral philosophy which pronounces it injurious to the goodness

ness of the Creator to suppose that man is corrupt : but the present state of man, under sin, is no reflexion upon the goodness of God. The wisdom of a political constitution is not impeached, because there are capital punishments inflicted under it ; for these are not imputable to the laws, but to a freedom of action in those, who, not having the fear of God before their eyes, yield to the suggestions of the Devil, as our first parents did, and transgress them. Their fall, through the malice of the tempter, gave occasion to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Unless we admit the corruption of man's nature, the whole of christianity, considered as a medicine, is superfluous and impertinent ; as offering remedies which are not needful, and applying itself to infirmities which do not exist. We can never introduce the doctrines of redemption and atonement ; Salvation by Jesus Christ can never be understood nor wanted, except it be allowed, that man is such as the Saviour found him, lame, and blind, and deaf, and dumb, and even *dead* in sin. When we believe this, then Jesus Christ is acceptable to us as the restorer of our nature to light and life, that is, as doing what the Gospel every where describes, and offers to our

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faith. Many well-meaning christians of this time thirst after this doctrine, and think they have heard nothing, unless they have heard of *Salvation by Jesus Christ*, which is what we properly call *the Gospel*; and if they do not hear it in the discourses from our pulpits, where they expect to hear it, they are tempted to wander in search of it to other places of worship: at least, they have a plausible excuse for so doing, though in reality there can be none sufficient in the case, because the Church itself, in its Liturgy, always preaches the Gospel, and prays according to it. It also furnishes us with a Catechism, which teaches the true doctrine of the Scripture concerning God and man, the necessity of regeneration, the means of grace, the state of salvation: and therefore the prospect of doing good upon the people is more certain from the use of forms of catechising, than from the common method of preaching on detached points of doctrine. We have therefore abundant reason to bless God for the late practice, which hath so universally prevailed throughout the kingdom, of instructing poor children in the doctrines of our church catechism. For teaching is beneficial, as well to the teacher himself, as to the learner: he is confined to a form of truth;

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and by dwelling oft upon it, he sees deeper into it, and becomes daily more attached to it. The fall of man and the impotence of nature will never be doubted by those who are properly instructed in their early years. They who are not so instructed, too often wander into wild opinions, and when they are grown high-minded, they delight in such works only as feed their vanity and multiply their errors; and an ambitious desire of being leaders in a party inspires them with such a zeal for making profelytes, as is rarely to be found among the children of truth.

III. But though these evils may in a great measure be prevented by timely catechising, and there is a provision in the Liturgy for keeping up in the people a proper sense of the *saving power of faith* (the subject which comes next under consideration), yet it must have a bad effect, and afford just cause of complaint, if the same be not also found in our preaching. Of late times, there hath been a prejudice in favour of good moral preaching; as if the people might do very well, or even better, without the knowledge of the christian mysteries; a good moral life being the end of all teaching. The enemies

mies of christianity, taking advantage of this prejudice, have made a total separation between the works of religion, and its doctrines; pleading the example and authority of some of our divines. And it must not be concealed, that, by delivering cold inanimate Lectures on moral virtue, independent of christianity, many of our clergy of late years have lost themselves very much in the estimation of the religious part of the laity. I would therefore beg your attention, while I remind you of a distinction, which a sense of your own duty, without any admonition from me, will lead you frequently to observe and enlarge upon; I mean, the great and obvious distinction between Religion and Morality; and here, by Religion is to be understood the *Christian* Religion; and by Morality, such good works as are independent of it. Religion is the rule which teaches us to believe in God, and to worship him. Its three great duties are faith, hope, and charity. Morality is the rule which teaches us to live soberly and honestly. It hath four chief virtues, which moral writers have well explained; Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude. By Justice we give to every man what is due to him. Temperance is the rule whereby we restrain the appetites of the body,

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which are all naturally given to excess. Prudence is that foresight which distinguishes good from evil, by the consequences of each; and Fortitude teaches us to meet danger, and bear sufferings. All these virtues are so useful one to another, that they cannot well subsist when they are separated. He who is without temperance, will not preserve his justice, because he will waste in self-indulgence what is due to other men; and he, who hath no prudence to consider consequences, will not be guarded against intemperance. It is evident these virtues are necessary for carrying us through life with honour and safety: therefore we exhort all christians to the practice of them. But the difference, which we are always to bear in mind is, that the unbeliever, having no christian principles, practises these virtues as well as he can, on secular and selfish considerations, in conformity to commandments of his own making; while the christian, animated by hopes and motives peculiar to Revelation, acts for the love of God, and in obedience to Jesus Christ; knowing that we are not to be saved for any thing we do, but for that faith in the promises, and that love to God and man, with which it is done. There is a justice and propriety in our being saved by faith rather

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than by works, because all good works, of every kind, may be practised in hypocrisy; they may proceed from the base motives of ambition, vanity, or self-interest, in which God hath no part: but in faith there can be no hypocrisy; because moral virtue is between man and man, but faith is between man and God, who seeth the heart, and cannot be imposed upon. Therefore no virtue can be certain and universal, but that of faith; which consideration entitles it to be the saving principle in the christian, as it was in the patriarchal religion. It is this only, which extinguishes the pride of Reason, and gives to God the glory of our salvation. It is this only, which brings all men to a state of equality. It is accommodated to every condition of life, for it costs nothing; and while it reduces the rich, by obliging them to a renunciation of the world, it raises the ability of the poor, by giving as much effect to a cup of cold water, as to the treasures of the wealthy. The same rule obtains remarkably in the powers of the mind; for the wise and prudent of this world, who appear strong in understanding, are sometimes found very weak in faith; and those endowments of learning, which should bring them nearer to God, often carry them farther from him; while the
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poor and simple have that faculty of the soul, that inestimable talent of a believing heart, which enables man to receive and understand the things of heaven. In every possible sense but the literal, are those words of the prophet fulfilled—*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low*; for in the kingdom of God, as it subsists in the heart of man, none of those inequalities are found, which are every where so observable in nature; and faith is the principle which levels them all.

Morality without Religion is the scheme of the Deists; who yet, that they may not seem destitute of a system, affect a Religion which they call Natural. But *their* natural religion hath no affinity to christianity; it is inconsistent with it, and opposite to it. It hath no Saviour, no Sanctifier, no Fall of Man, no Attonement, no Sacrifice, no Sacraments, no Sabbath, no Tempter, no Church, no Priesthood, no Resurrection, no Life everlasting. It hath no Creed; for it hath nothing to form a Creed upon; and so is a religion without that principle, which alone gives value and signification to every moral action. The heathens never depended for acceptance on any such plan of religion; they had recourse to rites of worship, sacrifices

sacrifices, supplications, and other acts of what we call *devotion*, for obtaining the pardon of sin, and the averting of divine vengeance. Natural religion, *as a system*, is a phenomenon risen up in these latter times; infidelity seems to have been increasing upon us ever since; and as the unedifying morality of our pulpits is a growth from the same root, we need not wonder at the zeal and earnestness, with which it hath very lately been treated, by a learned and able Prelate of this Church,* whose words are the words of wisdom, and his example worthy of imitation. Natural religion, therefore, from the ill use which hath been made of it, should at least be re-examined, and better defined; that if we have allowed more to it than we ought, and have hurt the cause of christianity, by giving advantage to its adversaries, we may go back again, as wise men have often found occasion to do; and this is one good use they make of their experience. There was an excellent work published many years ago by a learned divine of the Church of Ireland,† which opened the eyes of many scholars

* See the Bishop of St. David's Charge.

† Ellis's *Knowledge of divine things from Revelation; not from reason, or nature.*

scholars, shewing by plain argument, and undoubted evidence of facts, whence all our *knowledge of divine things* ever was, and ever must be derived; and it is much to be wished, that some proper hand would reduce the argument of that book to a compendium, for the benefit of the younger students in divinity. I am convinced this would deliver us from much danger, and shorten many of our disputes. Can that system of Religion be with propriety styled *Natural*, which never yet was discovered by uninstructed, untutored man? or that be deemed a *Religion* calculated for man in his present estate, which leaves out of the account the doctrines of his *fall* and his *restoration*? No serious clergyman needs to be asked, whether he wishes to teach his congregation in such a manner, and with such doctrine, as will promote their eternal salvation. It would be an insult to raise a question in such a case; and therefore, if any of us, from the prejudice of education, the force of example, or the want of timely attention and inquiry, have ever inclined to a barren form of teaching, let us endeavour, for the time to come, to speak and to labour in our proper character, as Ambassadors, who have a message from heaven, which they are bound to deliver,

at the peril of their own souls; trusting that the Gospel, where it is genuine, will be followed by that grace and power, which never yet failed to attend it. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise up and walk!" This was the *Gospel*, energetic and effective: it gave the ability with the command; the lame man felt it through all his powers; "he arose, he walked, he leaped, he praised God." So will the people be edified, and we shall be able to give a good account of our charge, at that time, when the fashion of this world, and, with it, all that is human in religion and learning, shall vanish away.

IV. *The constitution and use of the Church of Christ* is another subject, on which our principles, for some years past, have been very unsettled, and our knowledge precarious and superficial. Ignorance is dangerous here, because there are so many, whose interest it is to flatter us in it, and take advantage of it. The definition of the Church, contained in our Articles, was purposely less definitive than it might have been, to avoid giving farther offence to those whom we rather wished to reconcile; but it does not appear, that the Church hath gained any thing

thing by its moderation ; it hath rather lost ; because in virtue of that moderation, it hath been pleaded against us, that ecclesiastical unity may be dispensed with, and that all our differences in this matter are only problematical and immaterial.

But salvation is a gift of grace ; that is, it is a free gift, to which we have no natural claim. It is not to be conceived within ourselves, but to be received in consequence of our christian calling, from God himself, through the means of his ordinances. These can no man administer to effect, but by God's own appointment ; at first, by his *immediate* appointment, and afterwards, by *succession* and derivation from thence, to the end of the world. Without this rule, we are open to imposture, and can be sure of nothing ; we cannot be sure, that our ministry is effective, and that our sacraments are realities. We are very sensible, the spirit of division will never admit this doctrine ; yet the spirit of charity must never part with it. Writers and teachers, who make it a point to give no offence, treat these things very *tenderly* ; but he, who, in certain cases, gives men no offence, will for that reason give them no instruction. Light itself is
painful

painful to weak eyes; but delightful to them, when grown stronger, and reconciled to it with use; and he, who was instrumental in bringing them to a more perfect state of vision, though less acceptable at first, may yet, for his real kindness, be more cordially thanked afterwards, than if he had made the ease and safety of his own person the measure of his duty. It is by no means evident, that the Church hath ever recommended itself the more, by receding from any of its just pretensions. Generosity obliges and secures a friend; but an enemy construes it into weakness; and then, it never does any good. Yet the adversaries of the Church of England have always been persuading her to make the experiment, and have promised great things from it: with what views, it cannot be difficult to discover. It was an unhappy circumstance, and had very ill effects, when some pious men, of more zeal than discretion, who set out on the work of reforming this nation, opened an asylum for penitents, which took in people of all persuasions, without exception of any.* It came to be inferred from hence,

* See Mr. Wesley's first account of the Institution of Religious Societies among the Methodists.

hence, that souls might be saved as well without, as with a church; perhaps better; and when men have once begun to *neglect* rules, they go on to *despise* them, and know not where to stop, till all things are brought into confusion. An enthusiast of modern date (Baron Swedenborg) opens his *new Jerusalem Church* on a plan almost as wide as that of *Masonry* itself; to take in even Quakers, who have neither church, nor ordinances, of any kind. It is curious to observe, that in the same age, new and strange ways are affected of curing both the *souls* and *bodies* of men. And it now seems a duty incumbent on the College of Physicians, to guard their patients against the prevailing influence of medical imposture, as it certainly is in the Church, to guard her people against new and strange ways of salvation. We are informed, that the liberties taken of late years against the ministry of the church, have terminated in an attempt to begin a spurious episcopacy, or an episcopacy *without succession*, in the American Colonies: a particular account of the affair has been published in a Life of Mr. John Wesley, and the case appears to have been as reported. Mr. Wesley, when questioned about this fact in his life-time, did not deny it, but

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pleaded

pleaded *necessity* to justify the measure. See Memoirs of the Rev. John Wesley, by John Hampson, vol. 2, p. 171, 8vo.—a fatal precedent, if it should be followed. For if a Presbyter can consecrate a Bishop, we admit that a man may confer a power, of which he is not himself possessed; instead of “the less being blessed of the greater,” the “greater is blessed of the less,” and the order of all things is inverted.

Much mischief hath been done by unfaithful *histories* of the Church, written, with a partial intention, by Authors as much disaffected to its doctrine, as to its constitution and authority. Every man knows how much it is against him, when an importunate adversary, who hath ill will to his person, hath the delivery of his character, to those who are not acquainted with him. This happens very frequently to the church; and young, or ignorant readers, are poisoned past recovery. The most faithful modern histories, which can be found, should be consulted, and the fountains of antiquity resorted to. The antient church is the standard by which all modern ones are to be examined; and unless a man knows what the church was in centuries before the Reformation, he will

will see but darkly into the troubled water of later times, in which faction and party have confounded things; and it hath become as much the interest of some, that the church of Christ should be found *every where*, as it is the desire of others, that it should be found *no where*. Some historians, being affected to the superstitions of Popery, will speak more than the truth; others, being at variance with all establishments, will speak less than the truth; and between both, ecclesiastical history becomes perplexed and adulterated. This is one of the lamentable evils, to which we are subject in these latter days of christianity. To such as would study deeply, it hath been recommended, to compare the annals of Baronius with the centuriators of Magdebourg, that the truth may be drawn from both parties, tempering and qualifying each other. This may do well for detecting the innovations of the Church of Rome; but if we would guard against popular mistakes in the subject at large, it will be necessary to examine first, what the Church was under the Old Testament; for there we find its original establishment, its form, its authority, its ministry, its unity and uniformity, its maintenance, its independence; which things being so particularly laid down,

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no new establishment is to be found in the Epistles or the Gospels of the New Testament, but the antient constitution is referred to ; to shew us, in certain cases, what ought to be, from what had been. So zealous was our blessed Saviour for the preservation of peace and obedience, that even under the most corrupt state of the church (worse, we hope, than any man can discover now amongst us) he enjoined his hearers to submit to those who then taught in the *seat of Moses* ; allowing, bad as they were, that they had their authority by succession, and, on that consideration, were to be religiously obeyed, however greatly they had deviated from the wisdom and purity of their original institution. From the Scripture, we should proceed next to observe, what the church was in the first ages of the Gospel, before worldly policy, miscalled moderation, had any influence upon the opinions of christians. There is an epistle of St. Clement, on church unity and church authority, with which all students in divinity should be acquainted. It will teach them, what the christian society then was, and what it ought to be. Ignatius and Cyprian, both of them Martyrs, will give farther instruction. The latter is so particular and copious, that a code of discipline might nearly
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be formed upon his authority. With these preparations, we shall be better able to judge of what happened at the Reformation, when many things were right, and many wrong; when the Church of England, by the singular blessing of God, preserved its constitution and its doctrines, while many of the Reformed fell off by degrees, some into disorder, some into dissolution. What remains with us we must defend and preserve; trusting that the same God who hath raised this church, when trodden down to the dust, will never forsake us, till we forsake him.* To those who would read for purposes of piety (as necessary to scholars as to the common people) our Mr. Nelson will afford great edification; and it is a conciliating circumstance, that so excellent a work, upon the Festivals and Fasts of the Church, came from the hands of a layman.

V. Next in order to the Constitution of the Church, is the Constitution of the *State*. Many corrupt and
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* See *An Essay on the Church*, by a worthy Clergyman of this Diocese, printed at Gloucester, and to be had of Messrs. Robinsons, Paternoster-Row, London.

strange opinions are current amongst us, in respect to civil government ; and they are circulated with all that zeal, with which men usually act, when they have some lust to gratify. There is none more ungovernable than the lust of power ; and that the way to it may always be open, new rights are pleaded, which no Laws in the world ever yet recognized, because they are not consistent with that subordination, and right of possession, which are essential in society. A natural equality amongst mankind is contradictory to the actual condition of human nature. Women are not equal to their husbands, children are not equal to their parents, the foolish are not equal to the wise, the idle and dissolute are not equal to the sober and industrious. They cannot have equal rights, because the rights of man in society, so long as we admit that there is a divine law, and a moral government of the world, are the rights of duty, and virtue, and religion ; and no other rights can subsist in a state of civilization. The society which admits the rights of violence and rapine, is *felo de se*.

Equal liberty is another idea which cannot take place in society, because men are not equal in virtue. For as
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there are no rights but the rights of virtue, there is no liberty, but the liberty to which virtue entitles us. Thieves and assassins have no claim to liberty in common with honest men, and therefore, all laws deprive them of it, for the safety of the public. He who has forfeited the right to his life, must have forfeited his liberty, along with it. The man who kills another without law, is himself under sentence of death, by the law of God; and by parity of justice, that man must forfeit the right to his own property, who by violence deprives another of his possessions. Liberty of thought there must be in all men, good and bad, because it cannot be prevented; but the liberty of overt action, which is the only liberty that will please libertines, there cannot be, till the laws of God lose their force, and society itself is dissolved.

It has frequently been repeated by writers of a certain description, that Kings and Magistrates are the *servants* of the people, and this, in a sense of inferiority and subjection, like other servants. But if Kings are the servants, where are the subjects? If all are fathers, where are the children? If all are shepherds, where are the sheep?

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My brethren, these opinions fall under our consideration, not as we are politicians, but as we are concerned for the preservation of the divine laws, and the peace of the world in which we live. There is a blessing pronounced upon the peace makers; and what better way can we find of promoting the public peace, than by inculcating the principles of peace, and the duty of obedience; that according to the admonition of the Apostle, *we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty?* By *politics*, we mean the art of governing a city; the measures which are to be adopted on any emergency for the public safety; the convenience of treaties, the management of the public treasure, and the preparations for war. With these indeed, a preacher of the Gospel, as such, having no concern, leaves it to proper persons to strike out their own schemes, and pursue their own theories. Our political wisdom is nothing more than the honest and easy part of political duty, to be drawn from the word of God, where the case is made exceedingly plain to all whose minds are properly disposed. No doctrine is delivered to us in more decisive language, than that God is the king of kings, the only original of power; and that our duty, as christians, is derived from
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this confideration, and to be regulated thereby. God being alfo the fupreme Lawgiver, and the fountain of Juftice, he that executes the laws of this juftice, judges for him who is the judge of all: therefore, as the divine law itfelf hath ftated the cafe for us, he that refifts that power which executes the laws of divine juftice, refifteth that ordinance of God, which is neceffary to the prefervation of fociety. To refift the power of God in his own perfon, is impoffible; he can be refifted only in the perfons of thofe who aft under him, and for him; and when this happens he takes it to himfelf. Who therefore would have expected to hear, in a chriftian country, that rebellion exifts only in the eftimation of the public, from the accident of a mifcarriage? and that rebellion ceafes to be fuch, when it fucceeds? Horrid doctrines! the tendency of which is, to lay us open to the luft of power, or the violence of rapine, and turn the world into an Aceldama, a field of blood! I muft confeß it hath aftonifhed and afflicted me, when I have feen the power of God, his authority as a Lawgiver, his Providence in governing and difpofing of kingdoms, as totally omitted and forgotten by writers on Civil Liberty, as if no fuch things had ever been heard! Self-will, felf-government,

liberty as we like it, and property as we can seize upon it, have taken the place of divine Law, and divine Power, and every man is become his own Providence.

All mistakes concerning civil government arise either in the variety of human philosophy, speculating on the origination and primeval state of mankind, against better information, or from self-will and self-interest affecting sedition and confusion, through the pride of ambition, or the neediness of vice. Where these causes operate, they will produce strange books, and strange speeches, such as betray that blindness which hath been observed to fall upon nations, previous to their destruction; and therefore we are to pray, that what is past may be forgotten, and that we may be delivered from such appearances in the time to come; that the dangerous animosity of a party-spirit may cease amongst us, and that Englishmen, as their duty and happiness require, may love one another better, every day. Our security will be in setting aside all worldly considerations, and confining ourselves to the plain path of christian duty, under an assurance that this will prove to be our best policy and interest. To preserve us from wild speculations,

tions, it will be useful also to look back to the principles on which societies have been regulated in ancient times, and how they have succeeded and prospered; for it is as dangerous to society, as to religion, to imagine that there was neither wisdom nor experience in those who went before us; but that all the difficulties of past ages are come down to be solved by this generation. And here I recollect with pleasure and gratitude, that all farther reflections on this subject are rendered needless by a late work of a learned and eloquent layman, who hath very effectually exposed those wild opinions lately risen up to disturb the peace of mankind; and hath called us back to the measures of common sense and experience, at a time, when we were hastening toward anarchy, under the specious name of liberty; pointing out to us a more excellent way, which if we follow, we shall do well. As Christians and Englishmen, we are unquestionably obliged to those, who are not afraid to declare themselves against the overbearing violence of licentious principles, and the torrent of calumny which followeth so close after them: and it is to be hoped, *our* zeal will be stirred up by so laudable an example. If there be a blessing for him who reconciles individuals at strife, or families when divided,

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there must be a double portion for those, who infuse into a nation the spirit of peace, and with a god like beneficence check that rising storm, which would tear us away from our comforts, our possessions, our liberties, and our lives.

VI. But I must now hasten, in the last place, to a subject of more quietness, and less suspicion, in which wise men of all persuasions are more nearly of a mind; I mean, *the conduct of the christian life*. Modern times and new modes of education have given too great a latitude in the articles of dress, and dissipation, and self indulgence. Every thing is to be avoided, which tends to diminish that gravity and seriousness, which God expects to find in all those, who are flying from the wrath to come. It was observed of old, that when inconsiderate people are avoiding one extreme, they commonly fall into another, while reason and discretion keep the middle way. When protestants laid aside the austerities of superstition, they began to see less harm in the liberties taken by the world. The kind of life to which the first christians conformed, hath been considered as a sort of *heroic* piety, which had more of suffering and mortification

mortification than are now required of us ; as if the way to heaven could be easier, while the number of our temptations is probably increasing from the refinements of modern times, which, instead of giving us more liberty, call upon us for a greater degree of caution and reserve. One indulgence, when it becomes fashionable, begets another ; and a progress of descent (for such is this) is subject to an acceleration, which ends in total precipitation and destruction. Many of our younger clergy, when they come to look back upon their past years, will see, that their ministerial character was not sufficiently marked and distinguished according to the rules of the Church, which are all within the measures of prudence and decency. The world judges very much of men by their outward appearance. They never look for much gravity in the mind, if too much levity is visible in the person. If the article of dress is much attended to, they naturally suspect, that severer studies have been neglected. Of these things, the laity are as competent judges as the clergy, and they will judge for themselves, whether we give them leave or not. They will judge, that in all impropriety, there must be some degree of absurdity ; and that no man, whatever his

talents may be, can be respectable out of his proper character; on which considerations, every prudent person will, in respect of his outward appearance, become his own Censor.

There, is in the present times, a temptation which lies very hard on some minds, and either does so much mischief, or hinders so much good, that it is a dreadful snare, and I wish I could guard my younger brethren effectually against it; I mean, the fear of being suspected of false piety. It can never be sufficiently lamented, that the practice of devotion, and the doctrine of grace, so essential to the Gospel, should have fallen into disrepute, from the example of any persons, who have been discovered to have acted a godly part for mercenary purposes. But God forbid, that the hypocrisy of others should lead us into lukewarmness, and indifference, which are equally bad. Never let it be supposed, that christians can serve God, without the grace of God, because some have been so weak as to surfeit the wife with the presumption and folly of their spiritual pretensions. The life of devotion is still the gift of God; and it must be insisted upon, with our Church, that there is
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not in man one good thought, one holy desire, but from the continual inspiration of the divine spirit, *in all things directing and ruling our hearts*. Without this doctrine, we may be scholars and critics, and men of taste; we may be the monitors and moralists of civil society; but we are no longer to be considered as Christian Divines, neither will our labours be attended with any saving effect.

Lastly, that we may all serve God in the purity of his Gospel, we are to remember, that the christian life differs essentially from what was called morality, among the heathens. For to us, Jesus Christ is the pattern of holiness, the great Exemplar of perfection, of whom we are first to learn, what no heathen ever professed, to be *meek, and lowly in heart*; and accordingly, one of the best books extant, on the spiritual life, is entitled, *the Imitation of Jesus Christ*. It's language is barbarous, but it's matter is divine and heavenly, and hath administered instruction and consolation to thousands of devout christians. The way of true devotion must still be understood to be the same humble, secret, unaffected, un aspiring practice of piety, as it used to be of old.

old. The cross, which Jesus Christ carried for our salvation, is still the true emblem of our profession, from our baptism to our departure out of this life, and is to be borne by us in our minds, as a daily admonition to patient suffering, and self denial.

He who was tempted in the wilderness, prayed in retirement and solitude, taught in the temple, and went about doing good, did all these things, to teach his disciples, that they also must resist temptation, must converse with God in retirement, serve him zealously in his Church, and do good to the souls and bodies of their christian brethren, visiting them in their sickness, relieving them in their poverty, and teaching them in their ignorance, to the best of their ability. The example of Christ, being the plainest and the shortest rule, is the best we can follow, or recommend for this purpose.

To assist us in the great duties of prayer and meditation, books of devotion have their use ; but to us of the clergy, the Liturgy of our Church is the best companion, and the daily use of it in our churches, or families,

families, is required by the Canons: It cannot be denied, that from various reasons prevailing amongst us, we are much fallen off, of late years, from the practice of weekly prayers in our churches. Wherever this hath been neglected, we should exhort the people to the revival of it, if, circumstances will possibly permit; and alarm them against a mistake, to which they are all exposed, from a fanatical prejudice of baneful influence, namely, that they come to church only to hear preaching; and hence they are indifferent, even on a Sunday, to the prayers of the church, unless there is a sermon. But if sermons have not already taught them, that they are to be saved by the life and fire of devotion in their own hearts, little is to be expected from all the sermons they will hear in time to come. Devotion is a flame, which, like other flame, is given to spread. If a clergyman appears to be zealous in the duty of public prayer, the people will be thereby excited to attend him. But if he appears to be indifferent, they will continue to be so; and though their indevotion will be no excuse for his, his will always be assumed as an excuse for theirs. There is a prospect, that the next age may be better disposed, in this respect, than the present, from the late practice of gathering such

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multitudes

multitudes of children together in our funday schools, and accustoming them early to the service of the church. If it should prove so, all good people, who shall live to see it, will be gratified with the sight, the church will be edified, God will be glorified, and the people of England, as a nation, will have a better title to the blessings of peace and prosperity.

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